

FRIENDLY VISIT *k*

TO THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER.

Eccl. vii. 14.

*Many are the sayings of the Wise,
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
Extolling Patience—
But to th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails; or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.*

MILTON.

LONDON:

Sold by R. FAULDER, Bond-Street; J. MATHEWS,
Strand; J. DEIGHTON, Holborn; and C. DILLY,
Poultry. MDCCXCII.

[Price FOURPENCE.]

23

HOUSE OF MOURNING

A circular ink stamp from the British Museum, containing the Latin text "MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM" in three lines.

: 10 0 0 0 1

Don't by E. F. Evans, Inc. - Book 1, 1947

FRIENDLY VISIT, &c.

YOUR present affliction, my Dear Friend, demands something more than the usual forms of condolence. — Sorrow, which, like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be *alleviated* and *improved*. — This is what I aim at in addressing you, and if I seem to intrude, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much *better it is to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting^a*; — having received my best *Lessons, Companions, and even Comforts*, in it; I would administer from my little stock of experience: and while I thus endeavour to

^a Eccl. vii. 2.

assist your meditations, shall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of your loss, I should employ particular considerations: but a paper like this can only have a *general* aim; which is to acquaint the heart, at a favourable moment, with its grand concerns;—to give it a serious impression when *softened*; and an heavenly direction when *moved*.—Let us, therefore, sit down humbly together in this house of mourning:—If *the heart of the wise be found*^b here, your experience, I hope, will prove that here also it is *formed*:—and let us calmly contemplate some momentous Objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the first of these objects: with him we seldom form any close ac-

^b Eccl. vii. 4.

quaintance

quaintance till we meet him in trouble.—
 He commands silence now, that He may
 be heard; and removes intervening objects,
 that He may be seen. A Sovereign Dis-
 POSER appears, who, as *Lord of all*, hath
 only resumed what he lent;—whose will is
 the law of his creatures; and who expressly
 declares his will in the present affliction.
 We should seriously consider that all
 allowed repugnance to the determinations
 of his government (however made known
 to us) is *sin*: and that every wish to alter
 the appointments of his wisdom is *folly*.—
we know not what we ask. When God dis-
 covers himself in any matter, those who
 know him, *will keep silence before him*^c. *Shall*
he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct
him?—How excellent was the reply; ‘*Be-*
‘*hold I am vile!*—*what shall I answer thee?* *I*
‘*will lay my hand upon my mouth*^d.’

This silent submission under trying dis-
 pensations, is variously exemplified as well

^c Hab. ii. 20. ^d Job xl. 2, 4.

as inculcated in the scriptures. An awful instance of sin and sorrow occurs in the family of Aaron: his sons disregarded a divine appointment, and *there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them*; but Aaron *held his peace*^c.—Eli, in similar circumstances, silenced his heart with this single but sufficient consideration, “*It is the Lord*!”—David under a stroke which he declares consumed him, observes, “*I was dumb, I “opened not my mouth because thou didst it*”^e.—And Job, when stript of every comfort, blessed the name of him who *took away*, as well as *gave*^h.—Whatever be the nature of our calamity, may it be attended with such an humble and childlike spirit as these possessed!

But the Sovereign Disposer is also the Compassionate FATHER.—Among other instances of his tenderness, you must have observed the peculiar supports he affords under peculiar trials.—Let us mark, and

^c Lev. x. 2. 3. ^f 1 Sam. iii. 18. ^g Ps. xxxix. 9. ^h Job. i. 21.

acknowledge,

acknowledge, the hand which mingles mercy with judgment, and alleviation with distress.—The parents I have just mentioned lost their children under circumstances far more distressing than ours;—The desire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almost a stranger:—you strove hard to detain it, but He, who took the young children into his arms and blessed them, took yours; and, taking it, seemed to say, *what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*ⁱ;—patiently suffer this little one to come unto me, for of such is my kingdom^k composed:—*Verily I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father*^l.—“ If I
 “ take away your child, I take it to myself—Is not this infinitely beyond any
 “ thing you could do for it?—Could you
 “ say to it, if it had lived, ‘ thou shalt
 “ weep no more,—the days of thy mourning are
 “ ended^m?—Could you shew it any thing
 “ in this world like *the glory of God and*

ⁱ John xiii. 7.^k Matth. x. 14.^l Matth. xviii. 10.^m Isa. xxx. 19.

“ of

“ of the Lambⁿ ?—Could you raise it to any
 “ honour here like receiving a crown of
 “ life^o ?”

The voice of a *Father of mercies and a God of all comfort^p* speaks as distinctly in the death as in the birth of an infant. *A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, ‘refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border^a.—It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish^r.’*

Is it a pious Friend that has just yielded up his breath?—The same voice seems to say ‘turn from him, or rather turn from his clay,—his faded garment,—he himself

ⁿ Rev. xxii. 23. ^o James i. 12. ^p 2 Cor. i. 3.
^r Jer. xv. 17. ^s Matth. xviii. 14.

*' is taken from the evil to come ;—he is entered
' into peace'.*

When the able Minister, the exemplary Parent, or the faithful Partner depart, a consternation often seizes the circles which they blessed. We are so stunned by the sudden blow, or occupied with the distressing circumstances, that we scarcely hear God saying *' Fear not, I, even I, am he
' that comforteth you':—**' I your Father am
' yet alive ;—I gave you your depart-
' ed friend, and every benefit conveyed
' through him :—trust me for blessings yet
' in store ;—trust me with him, and with
' yourselves.'*

Whatever notions one who lives *without God in the world* may form of dying, *We* should learn from his word to regard it merely as a *Translation*,—a change in which nothing is lost which is really valuable.—As surely as we *believe that Jesus died and rose*

' Isa. lvii. 1, 2. ' Isa. li. 12.

again,

again, so surely do we believe that *them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*^u.—Taught of God, we should view Losses, Sicknefs, Pain, and Death, but as the several trying stages by which a good man, like Joseph, is conducted from a *Tent* to a *Court*.—*Sin* his disorder;—*Christ* his physician;—*Pain* his medicine;—the *Bible* his support;—the *Grave* his bed;—and *Death* itself an Angel, expressly sent to release the worn-out Labourer, or crown the faithful Soldier.—*I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them*^v.

But admitting the state of your departed friend to be doubtful, yet in all cases that are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of God, as a FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne though clouds surround it.—Whatever he has left

^u 1 Theff. iv. 14. ^v Rev. xiv. 13.

obscure we may safely leave him to explain.—Let us recollect that, amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things *clear* in proportion as they are *important*; and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our conscience, that the door is still open to *us*;—that it is awful to stand before it *unresolved*;—that we must trust him to-day;—and that to-morrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

Perhaps you are ready to reply ‘*I have heard many such things: and I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul’s stead*^w: but my heart, and my expectations are so crushed by this blow, that I can hear nothing but *thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound grievous;—thou hast no healing medicines*^x.’

Beware, however, of falling into their sin who *limited the Holy One of Israel*^y.—There is a charge continually brought

^w Job xvi. 2, 4. ^x Jer. xxx. 12, 13. ^y Ps. lxxviii. 41.

against man, that in his troubles, the Source and the Resource are equally forgotten.—*Though affliction cometh not forth of the dust^z,—yet none saith where is God my Maker, who giveth Songs in the Night^a?*—Endeavour then, in extremities, to recollect an All-sufficient FRIEND—a very present HELP in trouble.—HE at least may add (as he does in the passage just alluded to) ‘*I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds saith the Lord.*’—Cannot the voice which rebuked a tempestuous sea calm our troubled spirits? Is his hand shortened at all, that he cannot *bless our latter end* like Job’s, *more than the beginning^b*? Is it not the Lord *that maketh poor, and maketh rich; that bringeth low and lifteth up^c*?—Many, whose hearts have been desolate like yours, while they have looked *around*, have at length *looked upward unto Him and been lightened^d*.—A single promise has

^z Job v. 6.^a Job. xxxv. 10.^b Job xlii. 12.^c 1 Sam. ii. 7.^d Ps. xxxiv. 5.

afforded

afforded them not only relief, but strong consolation.

Let us, therefore, my Dear Friend, *turn again to this strong hold as prisoners of hope;—even to day can He render double to us^e. Let us look to Abraham's GOD, and his encouragement is ours; “Fear not,—I am GOD ALMIGHTY^f—q. d. I am all-sufficient in all cases:—I am enough;—and ‘able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think^g.—I have taken away thy ‘gourd, but dost thou well to be angry?—‘have I left nothing for thankfulness?—‘this world, however, cannot be your ‘home, nor its objects your consolation, nor ‘its wisdom your guide. They are all too ‘poor for the soul of man—Look unto Me ‘and be saved^h:—acquaint thyself with Me and ‘be at peaceⁱ:—follow Me and you shall not ‘walk in darkness, but have the light of life^k.—‘However dark and distressing the present*

^e Zech. ix. 12.

^f Gen. xvii. 1.

^g Eph. iii. 20.

^h Isa. xlv. 22.

ⁱ Job xxii. 21.

^k John viii. 12.

‘ state of things may appear, *commit thy
 ‘ fatherless children to my care, I will preserve
 ‘ them alive ; and let the widows trust in me*¹.’

Still the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it.—You can scarcely receive counsel from infinite wisdom, or comfort from omnipotence. To every fresh encouragement you are ready to reply
 ‘ *wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?—shall the
 ‘ dead arise and praise thee?—shall thy loving
 ‘ kindness be declared in the grave? or thy
 ‘ faithfulness in destruction*^m?’—His word repeatedly assures you they shall ; and that
*all that are in the graves shall hear his voice*ⁿ ; but it informs you also, that He can do abundantly more for the living than merely restore their dead friends, or revive their fainting spirits ;—that He can sanctify the separation,—give a divine life to the survivor, *though dead in trespasses and sins*^o, and inseparably unite both in his kingdom.—

¹ Jer. xlix. 11. ^m Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 11. ⁿ John v. 28.

^o Eph. ii. 1.

If the Comforter could make up for the loss of *Christ's* bodily presence ; yea, make it even *expedient* that HE should go away^p ; how much more can he supply the place of every creature ?

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to say with a confidence highly honourable to himself and his Gospel, ‘ my poor perishing gourd is, indeed, withered a day before I expected it ; —my broken reed is gone ;—but God is left,—*a father to the fatherless,—an husband to the widow^q,—and now, Lord, what wait I for ? truly my hope is in thee^r.*—Thou canst give me, in *thine house, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters, even an everlasting name which shall not be cut off^s;*—and, therefore, though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD OF MY SALVATION^t.’

^p John xvi. 7.

^q Pf. lxxviii. 5.

^r Pf. xxxix. 7.

^s Isa. lvi. 5.

^t Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Once more ; let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognize a gracious MONITOR.—He that can fill every void, here illuminates the darkest.—Whenever the Lord *strikes*, he *speaks*.—Let us listen at such a time as this with humble attention, yet with holy confidence, for it is the voice of a *Friend*,—a wonderful *Counsellor*.—Let us with the Prophet resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and *see what He will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reprov'd*.—If with him we thus watch our dispensation, *at the end*, like his, *it shall speak*^u.

God is continually raising up witnesses, and sending them in his name to *sound the alarm in Zion*^v—He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the foolish Virgin, to beware of slumbering, since the bridegroom is at hand : and when one is called away, to cry to those that remain, ‘ *be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not*

^u Hab. ii. 1,—3. ^v Joel ii. 1.

the Son of man cometh^w.—Some indeed, like the sons of Lot, desperately scorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage^x.—Some, like those in the Acts, are in doubt, saying one to another, ‘*what meaneth this?*’—and others mocking reply ‘*these men are full of new wine^y.*’—But TRUTH, like a Rock furiously assaulted but unshaken, remains to scorn its scorers: and, while the witnesses continue to bear a faithful and consistent testimony, God, sooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and his own word. Entering a careless family, he smites the first born; and, as one that *will* be heard, calls aloud ‘*Awake thou that sleepest;—arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light^z.*’

And is it not, my Afflicted Friend, an infinite mercy, if, by any means, God will enter with such a *light*,—that he will rouse such a *sleeper*?—that, by his minister *Death*;

^w Matth. xxiv. 44.

^x Gen. xix. 14.

^y Acts ii. 12, 13.

^z Eph. v. 14.

he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister?—What patience! what long suffering! to take such an one apart;—bring him from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions?—Is it not saying ‘*How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I make thee as Admah^a?*’—Certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conscience—conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the **CONTENDER**, and trembling before him, cries ‘*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God^b.*’

This, I say, is often the case, and should it be realized in yours, as it has been in that of your present Visitor, and many

^a Hosea xi. 8.

^b Jer. xxxi. 18.

others;—

others;—if, instead of flying for relief to every object but God, you are brought humbly to his feet with patient submission, serious enquiry, fervent prayer, holy resolution, and firm reliance:—if, in a word, by the severest stroke, the *enchantment* is also broken,—your soul *escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler*^c, and returned to its proper REST; what reason will you have to say

Those we call *wretched* are a chosen band.—
 Amid my List of Blessings infinite,
 Stand this the foremost,—‘*That my heart has bled.*’—
 For *All* I blest Thee;—Most, for the *severe*;
 Her death,—*my own* at hand——

But death at hand (as an old writer expresses it,) should be death in view, and lead us to consider next

OUR PROSPECTS from this House of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a present and

^c Pf. cxxiv. 7.

future

future world.—Many suppose that they can best contemplate the *present* world, by crowding the *house of mirth*^d; their whole deportment, however, shews that it makes them much too giddy for serious observation:—*having eyes they see not*^e. Look at the deceased, and contemplate present things. His days an *hand breadth*;—his beauty consumed like the *moth-fretten garment*;—his cares and pleasures a *dream*;—his attainments as the *grafs*, which flourisheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withereth;—his years a *tale*;—his strength, *labour and sorrow*. So soon is the whole *cut off and fled*, that we cannot help repeating with the Psalmist, *Verily—every man—at his best estate—is altogether—VANITY*^f,—or a *vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away*^g.

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they follow a friend to his grave, that life itself

^d Eccl. vii. 4. ^e Mark viii. 18. ^f Ps. xxxix. and xc.

^g James iv. 14.

exhibits little more than a funeral procession, where friend follows friend, weeping to-day and wept for to-morrow. While we are talking of one, another passes—we are alarmed, but behold a third! There is, however, relief in this very reflection; ‘ my friend is gone, but am I weeping as ‘ if I were to *stay*?—Is he sent for in the ‘ *morning*? in the *afternoon* I shall certainly ‘ be called, if I stay till then.’ Inconso-
lable distress, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waste our hours, and cause us to make fatal mistakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a single step towards meeting our Friends in that state, where present joys and sorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a dis-
tempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an Enemy still urged us to climb; and, as we ascended, pointed to *the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*^h;—if our hearts

^h Matth. iv, 8.

have

have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal ‘ *all these things will I give thee*ⁱ;’ let us now hear the voice of a Friend, calling us, though in an unexpected way, *to commune with our heart and be still*^k;—to know, at least in this our day of visitation, the things which belong to our peace^l; and also what those things are which *hide them from our eyes*.—It is at such seasons as these that we more clearly detect the lies of life.—It is in the House of Mourning that, what the scripture calls, lying vanities, lie peculiarly naked and exposed. Let us here examine what so lately dazzled us. What now is the *purple and fine linen*^m that caught our eye?—What is it to fare sumptuously only for a *day*?—Who is he that cries ‘ *Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*ⁿ?’—I trust you now feel the deep misery and utter ruin of that dying crea-

ⁱ Matth. iv. 9.^k Ps. iv. 4.^l Luke xix. 42.^m Luke xvi. 19.ⁿ Luke xii. 19.

ture,

ture, who can say nothing better to his soul than *this*.—You can scarcely help crying out, ‘ What sottishness, what madness ‘ this, in a moment so interesting as Life! ‘ —with a prospect so awful as Eternity!’

The truth is, God speaks variously and incessantly to man respecting his prospects both present and future ; but present things seize his heart, blind his eyes, stupify his conscience, and carry him away captive. Now “ affliction is God speaking louder,” and striving with the heart of man :—crying, as he has lately in your house, ‘ *Arise ‘ and depart, this is not your rest ; it is polluted, ‘ and, if you persist in attempting to make ‘ a rest of it, will destroy you with a sore ‘ destruction* °.’

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverse of his :—we love our native soil, and try to strike our roots deeper and deeper into it :—firmly fixed in earth, we would fain

° Micah ii. 10.

draw

draw our whole life, strength, and nourishment, from it. And here we should not only *fade as a leaf*^p, but, with *every tree that beareth not good fruit, be hewn down and cast into the fire*^q, did not mercy interpose. We seldom, however, discern mercy in its *first* approach. Is it *mercy* that tears me up by the roots?—that cuts the fibres of sweetest union?—does it prune away the finest branches? nip the loveliest buds? and cover the earth with blossoms?—Yes verily,—since the very life of the whole often depends upon the removal of a part, Mercy will wound to heal:—regard to the tree will strip off its most flourishing suckers:—the great Husbandman will not fail to adopt the sharpest means for the improvement of his choicest plants: *for every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*^r.—Though the Lord cause grief, yet it is in *compassion*, and according to the multitude of his mercies, for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of

^p Isa. lxiv. 6.

^q Matth. iii. 10.

^r John xv. 2.

men^s; but soon or late instructs all his children to say ‘ *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*’

Let not, therefore, the change of the present scene discompose but direct us:—it changes, in order to present the only unchangeable one.—By thus rending the veils which men try to throw over a dying state, and discovering TEKEL^u written on every creature, the most careless are often so roused, that they seem to awake and recover themselves:—they appear, for a time at least, to become *wise*, to *understand these things*, and seriously to *consider their latter end*^v. May this salutary impression, however, my Dear Friend, never be worn from *your* mind, but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding prospect which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may

^s Lam. iii. 32, 33.

^t Pf. cxix. 75.

^u i. c. wanting. Dan. v. 27.

^v Deut. xxxii. 29.

be necessary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you must often have remarked that the urgency and bustle of present things, not only incessantly cloud our future prospects, but early beget a false principle that the *present* life is the *only one*.—You must also have observed that ten thousand false maxims, which daily fly through the world, take their rise from this prime falsehood.—Whereas, in fact, the present life, instead of being the *whole*, is comparatively *nothing*:—a *Stage*, a *Porch*, a *Dream*, a weary day's *Journey*. What is this drop to the Ocean before us?—What this moment to Eternity? As a Theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace:—or as a Stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the present state is infinitely grand and important: but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the Pilgrim than to persuade him that he is at
Home;

Home; or to make him forget and drown his eternal interests in such a vision of the night as Life.

Do you not, my Dear Friend, sensibly perceive this?—While you sit here, does not the cloud break? and the mist subside?—Have you not already so realized *a better, that is an heavenly country*^w, as to admire him who pitched only a *tent* here^x, but steadfastly looked for *a city that hath foundations*^y.—Are you not ready to take hold of the skirt of this *Jew*, saying ‘*We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*’?’

Seeing this, you only see truths ever exhibited in the scriptures, and living principles in all who are *taught of God*^z; for he alone can enable us to use his own discoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus seeing Himself, his kingdom, and his

^w Heb. xi. 16.

^x Heb. xi. 9.

^y Heb. xi. 10.

^z Zec. viii. 23.

^a John vi. 45.

righteousness? — or whose removal may prove the occasion of our *seeking* them?

Just before the flood, there were, doubtless, among their *men of renown*^b, admired projectors; but there appears to have been but one *truly* wise man among them:—one who saw and seriously regarded his Prospects. And he, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house*^c. Now such a man is the Christian. He feels *the world passing away, with the lusts thereof, but that he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*^d.—I feel, says he, ‘that however finely they dress the
 ‘pageant of this world, it *passeth by*^e; to a
 ‘creature like me, going, hastening, such an
 ‘Ark is worth more than ten thousand dying
 ‘worlds.—Let the Gay laugh;—*let the*
 ‘*Despisers wonder and perish*^f;—with such
 ‘Prospects before me, I must be serious.
 ‘He that cannot lie has revealed the terrors

^b Gen. vii. 4. ^c Heb. xi. 7. ^d 1 John ii. 17.

• 1 Cor. vii. 31. ^f Acts xiii. 41.

‘ as well as the glories of a future state :—
 ‘ he speaks of *a worm that dieth not, and a*
 ‘ *fire that is not quenched*^g, as well as of *a*
 ‘ *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*^h.—I
 ‘ must not, I dare not, shut my eyes against
 ‘ these awful realities.—I will not sacrifice
 ‘ my soul to a jest, nor miss the single
 ‘ opportunity afforded me for its salvation.
 ‘ —He that calls for my whole heart is
 ‘ worthy of it ; while the things which
 ‘ have hitherto engrossed it, though they
 ‘ cannot *satisfy*, I find they can *ruin* it.—I
 ‘ *will, therefore, arise and go to my Father*ⁱ,
 ‘ —to my Saviour, who has promised to
 ‘ *cast out none that come unto Him*^k.—Yea,
 ‘ doubtless, I *count all things but loss that I*
 ‘ *may be found in him*^l, the true ARK, the
 ‘ only REFUGE, which God has provided
 ‘ for perishing sinners.’

Such a man, indeed, is the *Christian*, but the *Christian*, after all, is but a *Man*.—In

^g Mark ix. 44.

^h Pl. xvi. 11.

ⁱ Luke xv. 18.

^k John vi. 37.

^l Phil. iii. 8, 9.

a state like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles.—Even the *wise* Virgin slumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry is often made in the family, before that which will at midnight awaken the world:—one like that in the house of Pharoah for his first born; or that so lately heard in *yours*.—A cry, which, while it rouses the Sleeper, fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs, often produces such views of God, of the present, and of the eternal state, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

Here then, my afflicted, but, I hope, instructed, Friend, let us study the heavenly science of gaining by *losses*, and rising by *depressions*.—Leaving the wilderness, like Moses, let us ascend the mount of scriptural discovery, and survey a prospect of which his was but a shadow. Let us look from vicissitude and desolation to what alone is *incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away*^m;

^m 1 Pet. i. 4.

and,

and, in the house of affliction and death, let us contemplate a House *not made with hands eternal in the heavens*ⁿ.—How refreshing to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to *Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels; and to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven*^o!—the only family which cannot be divided;—the only friendship which shall not disappoint our warmest expectation.

Glorious as this prospect is (perhaps you are ready to reply) ‘ I have been long in
 ‘ the habit of viewing it very indistinctly.
 ‘ —My attention has been so fixed on one
 ‘ below, that I live looking rather *into* the
 ‘ Grave than *beyond* it.—My spirits are so
 ‘ broken, my heart so wounded, and my
 ‘ eyes so dim with watching and weeping,
 ‘ that I can hardly read what is before me.
 ‘ —Besides which, certain fears arise; and

ⁿ 2 Cor. v. 1.

^o Heb. xii. 22, 23.

though

‘ though indeed, I feel severely what you
 ‘ say concerning the *present* life, I view the
 ‘ glories of the *future* like a starving crea-
 ‘ ture, who, looking through the gate of
 ‘ the wealthy, surveys a plenty which but
 ‘ increases his anguish.’ There is, how-
 ever, this difference at least between your
 cases ; the plenty which *you* see is *yours*, if
 you are really willing to accept it.—You
 never received a gift which was so freely
 bestowed, or so suited to your necessity, as
 that *gift of God* which is *eternal life through*
Jesus Christ^p.—In order to view this more
 distinctly, let us consider, in the very seat
 of our Loss, the sufficiency of

OUR PROVISIONS in this respect.—
 For *Wisdom* hath built her house, she hath killed
 her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, and fur-
 nished her table.—She also crieth upon the highest
 places of the city, ‘ *whoso is simple let him turn*
 ‘ *in hither,*’ and to him that wanteth under-

† Rom. vi. 23.

standing

*standing she saith, ' come eat of my bread, and
 ' drink of the wine which I have mingled;—
 ' forsake the foolish and live^q.'—Man, indeed,
 is daily reminded by the Thorns at his feet,
 by the Sweat of his brow, and by the Dust
 to which he is returning, that his paradise
 is *lost*^r: but Paradise *regained* is considered
 rather as an Idea;—a subject for Poetry.
 That book, however, which I hope you
 have chosen as your best companion in the
 house of mourning, like the vision of Jacob,
 not only shews the heavens opened, but
 discovers a gracious Medium of communi-
 cation and intercourse, as it were *a ladder
 let down from heaven to earth*^s.—A medium so
 suited to the state of man, that the weakest
 and vilest, who is humble enough to take
 hold of it as God's ordinance;—advance a
 step at a time;—and call for strength to
 proceed; may climb by it from Earth to
 Heaven*.*

^q Prov. ix. 1,—6.

^r Gen. iii. 18, 19.

^s Gen. xxviii. 12. * Compare Gen. xxviii. with John i. 51.

Are you, my Dear Friend, among the number of those, who stand before God not only as stript of their *comforts* but humbled for their *sins*?—Open your book at the 61st chapter of Isaiah.—You will there perceive the most precious privilege of paradise restored: the Creator descending to the condition and wants of his creature, and once more holding *communion* with him.—The *broken-hearted*, the *captive*, and the *mourner*, are here shewn one mighty to save and to relieve: and, that they should not mistake their friend, when our Lord stood up in the synagogue to read, he selected this passage, and, having read it, he closed the book with saying ‘ *this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*.’—‘ I am, as if he had said, ‘ this Deliverer and *Desire of nations*^u; the ‘ *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*^v:—*blest* ‘ *are they that mourn; for they shall be comfort-* ‘ *ed*:^w—*blest are ye that hunger now; for ye*

^t Luke iv. 21.

^u Hag. ii. 7.

^v Heb. xiii. 8.

^w Matt. v. 4.

‘ *shall*

*' shall be filled:—blessed are ye that weep now ;
' for ye shall laugh^x.'*

I scarcely need observe that, in an address like this, (a bow drawn at a venture) formal statements of the different topics would be improper ; and, therefore, I shall not attempt to describe, in their order, the various provisions comprehended in that scheme of redemption, usually termed the gospel. It may be necessary, however, to remark, that the whole is a proposal to the *broken heart*, answering all its objections, and meeting all its wants : and that such a proposal will be cordially received only in proportion as this disposition prevails.—As it is the *Sick* who best know how to value a physician, the *Debtor* a surety, and the *Criminal* a pardon ; so it is the awakened conscience alone which will embrace a constitution calculated to humble the *pride*, and mortify the *corruptions*, as well as relieve the *wants*, of man.—If *without shedding of blood there can be no remission^y*, he, who is

^x Luke vi. 21.

earnest to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on *the accursed tree*: and, however the *preaching of this cross* shall be esteemed *foolishness among them that perish*^a, such an one will not only rejoice in the provision, but magnify the means. ‘*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*’^a.

Our Lord represents the blessings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feast, which a *King made for the marriage of his Son*; but when *all things were ready*, and invitations repeatedly sent, he points out the ruin of the world in its indisposition to accept his gracious proposal.—*They made light of it, and went their ways*!—However different their pursuits, they all agreed to reject the invitation; they began with *one consent* to make excuse:—some urged reasons, and some abused the messengers;—but what is this more than the history of human nature in every age^b?

^a Heb. ix. 22.

^a 1 Cor. i. 18.

^a Gal. vi. 14.

^b Matt. xxii. 1,—6.

Let

Let us, however, my Dear Friend, never forget that the gate lately mentioned*, though strait, is *open*; and that only *unbelief* and *indisposition* stand without. — All things are *ready*; may his gracious influence, accompanying this humbling providence, form in you a spiritual taste for them! — Certain I am that, whenever this is attained, his *name* will be *as ointment poured forth*^c; — it will give a favour even to obsolete poetry.

Christ is a path,—if any be misled;
 He is a robe,—if any naked be;
 If any chance to hunger—he is bread;
 If any be a bondman,—he is free;
 If any be but weak,—how strong is he!
 To dead men life he is;—to sick men health;
 To blind men sight;—and to the needy wealth;
 A pleasure without loss;—a treasure without stealth.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treasure, as a God of order, he is pleased to use a system of means; one of

* Page 29. ^c Canticles i. 3.

which I hope he is now employing for your soul's health.—I love to indulge hope, for affliction is a seed time; and let me freely enquire, since God has called you aside, has spoken so emphatically, and you have had leisure for serious meditation, do not the provisions of the gospel appear new, sufficient, and exactly suited to your case? —Do you not mark that Gold which the thief cannot steal? that Foundation which no tempest can shake? and that Peace which the world can neither give nor take away?—Does not the religion of JESUS, that is so forgotten and degraded among men, stand forward now as the *one thing needful*?—does not his friendship appear now to be *that better part which shall not be taken away*^d? and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is that God often makes his truth appear; and causes the gospel (like a plank thrown out to the perishing mariner) to be properly known and prized.

^d Luke x. 42.

In health and ease, ingenious speculations may amuse and satisfy us; but I conceive you now feel with me, that when he *takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke*^c, our sorrows are too deep to be alleviated by the mere Orator or Philosopher; we even turn in disgust from him who would thus trifle with our case;—we need a support the world cannot afford.—‘ I faint, says the wounded
 ‘ soul; I want an almighty arm to lean on
 ‘ now; yea a very tender and compassionate
 ‘ one too;—one like that of the Son of
 ‘ Man.—I need a *merciful and faithful High*
 ‘ *Priest, who, having been tempted, knows how*
 ‘ *to succour the tempted*^f;—that Man of sor-
 ‘ rows, that Brother born for adversity, who,
 ‘ being *acquainted with grief*, can enter into
 ‘ my case, and commune with me in all
 ‘ the peculiarities of my distress.—I now
 ‘ need one, who can quiet me on his own
 ‘ breast, and speak to me with his *own voice*,
 ‘ *weep not, the child is not dead but sleepeth*^g.—
 ‘ *Weep not, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest*,—

^c Ezek. xxiv. 16. ^f Heb. ii. 17, 18. ^g Luke viii. 52.

‘ *when thou passest through the waters I will be
 ‘ with thee^h.—It is true, this is the land of
 ‘ death, but I am the resurrection and the lifeⁱ:
 ‘ —this is, indeed, a dry and thirsty land
 ‘ where no water is^k; but I will lead you to
 ‘ fountains of living waters:—I will wipe away
 ‘ all tears from your eyes^l.*’

You are ready, perhaps, to say ‘ O that
 ‘ I knew where I might find him;—but
 ‘ religion has been with me rather a case of
 ‘ necessity than the high privilege of com-
 ‘ muning with such a comforter.—My
 ‘ heart is alienated, wandering, and some-
 ‘ times rebellious.—My mind is too uncol-
 ‘ lected even to attend to your present short
 ‘ address.—I have been often absent since
 ‘ you began.—I feel the misery of living at
 ‘ such a distance from my heavenly friend,
 ‘ (especially at this time,) but want liberty
 ‘ to approach nearer:—Could I indeed re-
 ‘ pose on the bosom you just mentioned—

^h Isa. xliii. 2.

ⁱ John xi. 25.

^k Ps. lxiii. 1.

^l Rev. vii. 17.

‘ but

‘ but alas! while I see something of the
 ‘ freeness and fulness of those proposals
 ‘ made to the guilty and to the wretched,
 ‘ I tremble to venture ;—I have no strength
 ‘ to pray ;—Death itself reminds me of
 ‘ transgression ; — My thoughts fly every
 ‘ where but to God.’

We readily acknowledge that among other views of death it should be regarded as *the wages of sin^m*.—It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However Pride may boast, or Ignorance presume, he who measures by the standard of a law which is so spiritual as to regard a corrupt desire, will conclude with the apostle, that, *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before Godⁿ*.—A view of the divine character and of his own, led not only a Publican to smite upon his breast as the seat of apostacy and pollution, and cry, ‘ *God be merciful to me a*

^m Rom. vi. 23.

ⁿ Rom. iii. 19.

‘*sinner**,’ but so perfect and upright a man as Job to *abhor himself*, and repent in *dust and ashes*^p :—I may add that, as *we* become proficient in their school, we shall be more ready to confess than to complain ;—we shall learn to justify God in any instance of his righteous displeasure ; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far less than our iniquities deserve^q !

But while the Christian, as a penitent, looks upon him whom he has pierced and *mourns* ; as a believer, he looks at him who was wounded for transgression and *hopes*.—He finds it as desperate to doubt the *remedy*, as to deny the *disorder*.—Having formerly rushed headlong with the *presumptuous*, he now fears perishing with the *fearful* and *unbelieving*^r.—He sees an atonement of God’s own providing ; he pleads upon God’s own authority the merit of that blood *which cleanseth from all sin*^s ; and by thus receiving

* Luke xviii. 13.

^p Job xlii. 6.

^q Pf. ciii. 10.

^r Rev. xxi. 8.

the record which God gives of his Son, he sets his seal to it that God is true¹.

Is this, my Dear Friend, in any degree your case?—Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet discover a resting place?—Instead of wishing to evade the charge of “ manifold sins and
“ wickedness committed by thought, word,
“ and deed against the Divine Majesty;
“ provoking most justly his wrath and
“ indignation against you, do you earnestly repent?—Is the remembrance of
“ them grievous, and the burden of them
“ intolerable?”—Do you sincerely desire to be freed from this burden, and to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God?—that heavenly communion and rest which has been mentioned?—*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world²!*—*Behold him exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins³!*—Come to him as a sinner,

¹ John i. 7.

² John iii. 33.

³ John i. 29.

and

and touch, with humble confidence, but the hem of his garment and you shall be made whole^w;—Wait upon him and you shall obtain both strength and liberty; for if the Son make you free, you shall be free-indeed^x.

Provision made for fallen nature, corresponding to its various wants, is at once a character and an evidence of our Religion. It is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its promises correspond with its precepts. To use the language which best conveys its meaning, *The kingdom of God is not in word only but also in power^y*.—He who enlightens the blind eyes, undertakes to *strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees^z*.—The Spirit of wisdom and understanding is sent to be also a Spirit of *might, of grace, and of supplication^a*.—It is peculiar to our Teacher that he *enables* as well as instructs his disciples: he first presents a *prospect* of the inheritance, then a *title* to it through

^v Acts v. 31.

^w Matt. ix. 21.

^x John viii. 36.

^y 1 Cor. iv. 20.

^z Isa. xxxv. 3,—6.

^a Compare

Zec. xii. 10. with Eph. i. 19.

his death, and together with these, affords *strength* to rise and pursue it.—Turn to the 36th chapter of Ezekiel and you will find your case amply provided for^b, but recollect that it is added, ‘ *I will yet for this be enquired of, to do it for them^c.*’

Is any, therefore, afflicted, let him pray^d; not only in the public sanctuary, or in the retired closet, but let him consider that there is a new and living way, consecrated through the vail^e of a Redeemer’s human nature, from every scene of retirement or action to a MERCY SEAT; where he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness; especially such as sit in darkness and the shadow of Death^f. Our very misery and infirmity should, in defect of other preachers, point out the seat of our relief; and direct such frail and depraved creatures to the common Friend of the weary and heavy laden. Pouring into his bosom

^b Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. ^c Ezek. xxxvi. 37. ^d James v. 13.

^e Heb. x. 20. ^f Pl. cvii. 9, 10.

all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honour his character, and obtain his assistance: *for we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need^g. Is it not a time of need with you? endeavour, at his command, to approach with an holy confidence for the *supply of all your need according to his riches in glory^h*; and, at this time particularly, for the illumination and comfort of his holy Spirit. He whom you supplicate not only *invites*, but *reasons* with you. ‘*If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask himⁱ?*’

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less, every where; but serious, vital, spiritual, religion is *a case of*

^g Heb. iv. 15, 16.

^h Phil. iv. 19.

ⁱ Luke xi. 13.

necessity,

necessity with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we *spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not*^k; we look every way, and call to every thing, till each in return loudly replies '*It is not in me*'^l.—Well, indeed, will it be, if, after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only bread for a hungry soul, the only ~~for~~ ^{or} balm for a wounded heart.

However foreign, my Dear Friend, these truths were from your consideration when we first sat down together, if it shall please him, who *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*^m, to shine into your heart, and effectually discover the *exceeding riches of his Grace* in these provisions: then, though you sit weeping over your loss, we are assured from unquestionable authority, that Angels are rejoicingⁿ for your unspeakable gain.—We are certain also, that not only every

^k Isa. lv. 2.

^l Job xxviii. 14.

^m 2 Cor. iv. 6.

ⁿ Luke xv. 10.

*real friend will cry ‘ this day is salvation come
 ‘ to the house° where we lately wept ;’ but
 that, drying your tears, you yourself will
 be compelled to express your grateful sense
 of the correction you now deplore, and
 sing, with a companion and fellow-profi-
 cient in the school of affliction^p,*

Father I bless thy gentle hand ;
 How kind was thy chastising rod
 That forc’d my conscience to a stand,
 And brought my wand’ring soul to God !

Foolish and vain, I went astray
 Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord ;
 I left my guide,—I lost my way ;
 But now I love and keep thy word.

And here, suffer me to drop a word or
 two respecting these

OUR COMPANIONS in the house of
 mourning.—Society is peculiarly pleasant
 when we are benighted on a journey : and
 especially that of a citizen of the place to

° Luke xix. 9.

^p Ps. cxix. 67,—71.

which

which we are going.—It is encouraging to travel with those, who are convinced, that if *they are chastened of the Lord*, it is, *that they should not be condemned with the world*¹.—*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*²: and here they are educating for it. Here they sit at the foot of the Cross, and receive lessons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

*Blessed also are the pure in heart; for they here see God*³; who never so unveils himself as in seasons of distress. In sight of his character and word, they bow before his providence, yea trust him in the stroke; for hope is made to arise here, as a light in darkness. Here the spiritual Husbandman is taught to go forth weeping, and bearing the precious seed of faith and love, penitence and prayer; assured that he shall come again with Joy, bringing his sheaves with him⁴. Here also the heavenly Scholar acquires the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 32.

² Matt. v. 3.
³ Pf. cxxvi. 6.

⁴ Matt. v. 8.

word in season to him that is weary^u. And here the true Soldier of Jesus Christ is found *fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life*^v in the very valley and shadow of death. He is here instructed to *cast down imaginations*^w, those reasonings which peculiarly infest and darken the house of mourning; and taking the *shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, he wrestles not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers*^x:—a mighty though secret conflict which God shall one day declare to the world; and which, when explained, will leave its most celebrated heroes *silent in darkness*^y.

‘*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock*^z,’ for in this house they all have left the prints of their feet.—Here stood Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel^a; and here Aaron deplored his sons^b. Here we trace the steps of David going up to his chamber and crying

^u Isa. l. 4.

^v 1 Tim. vi. 12.

^w 2 Cor. x. 5.

^x Eph. vi. 12,—16, 17. ^y 1 Sam. ii. 9. ^z Canticles i. 8.

^a Gen. xxxv. 20.

^b Lev. x. 3.

with

with a loud voice ‘ *would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son! my son^c!* and those of Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, silently resigned *the desire of his eyes* to the stroke^d. But enumeration is vain: hither came all the sons of God, the only begotten not excepted, for JESUS himself stood *and wept* at the grave of a friend^e.

With such company, is it not far better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting^f?—I knew one of these, a man who had seen affliction by a rod^g like yours;—a man who walked and wept in solitude, but with no expectation of being overheard.—There is something sacred in grief, and we cannot listen to its effusions with too much candour: great candour, indeed, is here required, but, if afforded, it may procure you at least, a *Companion*, as you pass through this vale of tears.

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. ^d Ezek. xxiv. 16. ^e John xi. 35.
^f Eccl. vii. 2. ^g Lam. iii.

***** ‘*Set thee up way-marks*^h;

‘ —I desire here to set them up, and to record the severest of my visitations in the house of my pilgrimage.—Lord, prepare me for the next!’

‘ I perceive I could not have properly sympathised with a friend in a similar case before this stroke.—I could not have *understood* it.’

‘ I have, at times, so felt the importance of eternal things, that I thought the loss of any present comfort would be tolerable:—but I had no idea how much depended on being *ready*, when the Son of man came in such a providence.’

‘ I feel I now stand in the right position to see the *world* and the *word*;—they both appear under aspects entirely new.’

^h Jer. xxxi. 21.

When

‘ When I find “ my joys packed up and
 “ gone ;” my heart slain ; the delight of
 “ my eyes taken away ;—when I recollect
 “ who is gone before her, who is following,
 “ and what remains for the world to offer ;
 “ my heart cries, ‘ *I loathe it, I would not live
 “ alwayⁱ ;*’—‘ I thank God that *I* am also
 “ to go.’

‘ I perceive I did not know how much
 ‘ my life was bound up in the life of a crea-
 ‘ ture :—when *she* went, nothing seemed
 ‘ left :—one is not, and the rest seem a few
 ‘ thin and scattered remains.’

‘ And yet how much better for my lamb
 ‘ to be suddenly housed,—to slip unexpect-
 ‘ edly into the fold to which I was conduct-
 ‘ ing her, than remain exposed here?—
 ‘ perhaps become a victim ?’

‘ I cried, ‘ O Lord, spare my child !’—
 ‘ he did—but not as I meant ;—he snatched
 ‘ it from danger, and took it to his own
 ‘ home.’

ⁱ Job vii. 16.

‘ I have often prayed, ‘ Lord, soften my
 ‘ heart! humble my pride! destroy my
 ‘ levity!—I knew enough of his way to
 ‘ fear the *means*; and he has, in mercy
 ‘ towards me, regarded my *soul* more than
 ‘ my *feelings*.’

‘ I prayed earnestly for her life:—duty
 ‘ compelled me to say ‘ *thy will be done*,’—
 ‘ but I *meant* nothing.’

‘ O my God, how long hast thou come
 ‘ *seeking fruit on this tree*^k! how much hast
 ‘ thou done to cultivate it!—shall it still
 ‘ remain fruitless?—shall it be cut down
 ‘ after all?’

‘ My passions forged impressions that she
 ‘ would live; but I now plainly perceive I
 ‘ am called to regard *God*, and not *impressions*.’

‘ I have been long like one in a fever,

^k Luke xiii. 7.

‘ attended at times with a strong delirium :
 ‘ —I begged hard that I might not be bled,
 ‘ but he meant a cure, and pierced my
 ‘ heart.’

‘ O how slender, how brittle, the thread
 ‘ on which hang all my earthly joys!’

‘ I ever wish to be asking ‘ am I ready,
 ‘ should he send again and take * * *, or
 ‘ * * *, or myself?’—*Setting my house in order*¹
 ‘ will not make death approach sooner ;
 ‘ but, that it will render his coming much
 ‘ easier, I feel by sad experience.’

‘ When I pass by the blaze of dissipation
 ‘ and intemperance, I feel a moment’s
 ‘ relief.—I say to my heart, ‘ be still ;—at
 ‘ least she is not left to follow these ignes
 ‘ fatui :—how much better is even the
 ‘ grave for my T— than *the end of these*
 ‘ *things*^m?’

¹ Isa. xxxviii. 1. ^m Rom. vi. 21.

‘ It

‘ It is vain for me to wish, as I have
 ‘ done, to leave the world and go to my
 ‘ father that I might inquire into the whole
 ‘ of the case ;—the reasons, the steps, the
 ‘ issue, &c.—In a short time I shall,—but
 ‘ he says enough *now*, if I have ears to
 ‘ hear.’

‘ In the mean time, help me, O my
 ‘ God and Father, to recollect that I
 ‘ received this drop of earthly comfort from
 ‘ a spring which still remains!—help me to
 ‘ feel that nothing *essential* is altered! *for*
 ‘ *with thee is the fountain of life*ⁿ:—part of
 ‘ myself is already gone to thee, help what
 ‘ remains to follow.’ * * * * *

* * * * *

If this humble attempt to improve your
 affliction has been attended with any suc-
 cess, you will readily admit a few conclud-
 ing hints with respect to

ⁿ Pf. xxxvi. 9.

OUR DUTY in such circumstances.—And one of the first, and principal duties of the state, is, as hath been expressed, to ACKNOWLEDGE GOD in it.—It was charged upon some, that they *returned not to him that smote them, nor sought the Lord*° in their distress. On the contrary, the clear apprehension Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as instructive as his patience under them. While Grief *rent his mantle, Faith fell down and worshipped*,—‘*The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*’.^p Let us learn from him never to lose sight of the *Author*, by an undue regard to the mere *circumstances* of our loss.—We may think and speak of the symptoms and stages of the late removal;—of the physicians, of the remedies, &c. in their supposed right or wrong application; but not so as to forget that an unerring Providence presided over the whole, yea actually *conducted* every part on reasons as righteous as inscrutable.—Whatever may ap-

• Isa. ix. 13. ^p Job. i. 21.

pear to us peculiar in the sick chamber, the whole was but God's intended method of removing one, who had lived his full (i. e. his appointed) time. *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee: thou hast appointed him his bounds which he cannot pass*^a. Instead of fixing our attention upon means and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to him who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. *Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of*^r:—let not the creature hide the Creator, nor present things remain the fatal screen of the future, but, in every occurrence, mark the great cause, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things*^s:—who numbereth the *very hairs of our head*, and without whom even a *sparrow falls not to the ground*^t.

While others, therefore, are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a comforter, yea, are going to their worst

^a Job xiv. 5, 6.

^r Isa. ii. 22.

^s Rom. xi. 36.

^t Matt. x. 29, 30.

enemy

enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, “ Lord, *to whom shall we go*” but ‘ to THEE ? ’—Consider your Physician as now proposing a most serious question to your conscience, ‘ *wilt thou be made whole* ? ’ may the language of your heart be that of the apostle’s, “ if by *any means*” :” then, though seemingly swallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you shall find a resource in it, and finally be preserved by it^x.—This dart, like that which once pierced an imposthume in battle, shall bring health with its wound :—and you shall be enabled, with many that are gone before you, to say ‘ *the Lord hath chastened me sore : but he hath not given me over unto death*’.

Duty also directs you to MODERATE YOUR GRIEF.—Our heavenly Father, who *knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust*^z, allows us to mourn when he afflicts us ; he often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to *weep with them that*

^u John vi. 68.

^x Jonah ii. 7,—10.

^v John v. 6.

^y Pf. cxviii. 18.

^w Phil. iii. 11.

^z Pf. ciii. 14.

weep :

weep^a:—but he admonishes us also of a danger on each hand. ‘*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*^b.—If we seriously profess Christianity, our very profession implies, (not only a subjection to our Lord’s will, but,) that we have special resources in our affliction; several of which have been already named.—That, among other of our privileges, there is *a peace from God which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds*^c through Life and Death: and that we have many reasons for *not sorrowing as others who have no hope*^d.—Besides which, Christians have a post of honour to maintain:—an *high calling*^e to demonstrate and commend:—we shall (like the pilot in a storm) be brought to our principles; and, *as sorrowful yet always rejoicing*^f, should prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is such a thing as nursing and cherishing our grief;—employing a “busy-meddling memory to muster

^a Rom. xii. 15.

^b Heb. xii. 5.

^c Phil. iv. 7.

^d 1 Thess. iv. 13.

^e Phil. iii. 14.

^f 2 Cor. vi. 10.

“ up past endearments,” and personate a vast variety of tender and heart-rending circumstances.—There is a tearing open the wound afresh by images and remembrances, and thereby multiplying those pangs which constitute the very bitterness of death itself. Our melancholy exceedingly affects this voluntary torture ; it seeks expedients, and will listen to the most unjust and aggravated accusations which can approach a tender conscience respecting the deceased. But conscience should rather be concerned to repress such a disposition.—It is a state of temptation.—It desperately strives to retain what God has determined to remove:—in some cases, it seeks to penetrate an abyss he forbids even conjecture to explore : and, while it unfits the mourner for the pressing duties of his station, it leads to that *sorrow of the world which worketh death*^s to his body, soul, and christian character.—How different and superior the sentiments of DAVID ! —*His servants said unto him, ‘ What thing is*

^s 2 Cor. vii. 10.

F

‘ *this*

‘ *this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but, when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.*’ And he said, ‘ *While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live; but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?—can I bring him back again?—I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME^h.*’

Present circumstances also admonish you to KNOW YOUR OPPORTUNITY, and to improve this season as peculiarly favourable for spiritual advancement.—There is a *tide* in the concerns of religion; the scripture calls it the *day of visitation*ⁱ, and sends us to the *stork* and to the *swallow*^k for instruction respecting it.—Your heart is now soft, its fascinations withdrawn, and the call loud and affecting; endeavour, therefore, to take the benefit of a remedy you feel so expensive.—If, in a sense, “ smitten Friends “ are Angels sent on errands full of love,”

^h 2 Sam. xii. 21,—23. ⁱ Luke xix. 44. ^k Jer. viii. 7.

instead of weeping over their tombs, let us listen to the voice which properly arises from them; especially if it be our privilege to bury one who, like Abel, *being dead yet speaketh*¹, and who would be ready to say to his mourners, ‘ *Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children*^m,—*I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*ⁿ, and received my crown.—I cannot now come to weep with you, but you may ascend and rejoice with me, where there is *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away*^o.—If you truly love me, prepare to follow me.—If you earnestly wish to see me again, seek not the living among the dead, but arise, and become *a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*^p.—Take that heavenly lamp which *shineth as a light in a dark place*; walk humbly by it till the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart^q.—Haste, my beloved, towards the

¹ Heb. xi. 4.^m Luke xxiii. 28.ⁿ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

• Rev. xxi. 4.

^p Heb. vi. 1, 2.^q 2 Pet. i. 19.

* things which *eye hath not seen**; and, ere
 * the eternal day break, and the present sha-
 * dows flee away, *run with patience the race*
 * *set before you, looking unto Jesus**.—How
 * will my cup overflow to meet you among
 * those who daily *come hither out of great*
 * *tribulation*: and, having *washed their robes*
 * *in the blood of the Lamb, serve him day and*
 * *night in his temple**.*

Embrace every method God hath recom-
 mended for maintaining communion with
 him, and obtaining relief from him.—The
 various ordinances of his House, the encour-
 agements of his Word, the society of his
 Children, and especially Prayer.—Often
 speak to Him who *seeth in secret*^u, and *is*
nigh unto all that call upon him^v, though,
 with the Woman of Canaan, you can only
 say, ‘*Lord, help me*^w.’—Not only an high
 commendation, but a miracle followed her
 request.—She urged it under the greatest
 discouragements, but you have both a com-

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. * Heb. xii. 1, 2. * Rev. vii. 14, 15.
 * Matt. vi. 18. * Pf. cxlv. 18. * Matt. xv. 23.

mand and a promise, ‘ *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*^x.’

And, while you search the Scriptures and attend the Church, you will at once be instructed and encouraged by marking in both those footsteps which we lately considered.—They are, indeed, not so explicit in the latter; but attention to the scriptural account of the christian character, will greatly assist you in distinguishing real christians from those who, equally forward and corrupt, have at all times assumed their name, and mixed in their society, to their grief and scandal^y.—Leaving these unhappy *exceptions* to their proper judge, follow the unerring *Rule* he has put into your hand, and those who walk by it; particularly, such as are your companions in affliction. You will see them passing before you with not only the same wounds in their hearts, but almost the same words in their lips.—

^x Pf. l. 15. ^y Phil. iii. 18, 19.

Study their course; mark their progress; observe how they held his arm, pleaded at his throne, reposed in his bosom, and magnified his truth, who walked with them in a furnace which, like that of the three children, burnt nothing but their bonds^a.

‘ But who is sufficient for these things ? ’

To improve the opportunity you discern, and to keep pace with those you approve, SEEK DIVINE ASSISTANCE; or, as St. Paul has expressed it, ‘ *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus^a.*’ If religion has vast proposals to make on the one hand, to be truly religious is a mighty aim on the other, and can be accomplished only *through HIM that loved us^b*. Opposing omnipotence to difficulty, was their *secret*, who so gloriously overcame a world that was not worthy of them: read their history in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and see what a firm reliance, called faith,—a *seeing Him who is invisible*, will perform. That invaluable re-

^a Dan. iii. 25.

^a 2 Tim. ii. 1.

^b Rom. viii. 37.

cord seems to say, ‘ *Our fathers trusted in thee : they trusted, and thou didst deliver them : they cried unto thee and were delivered : they trusted in thee, and were not confounded^c.*

We are, indeed, called to *aim* and to *act*, and have the greatest promises annexed to the endeavour : but are as frequently reminded that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*, but that *our sufficiency is of God^d*. Christ encourages no one to advance on the ground of his own *strength*, any more than on that of his own *desert* :—he is as jealous of the power of his Arm as of the merit of his Blood. He admitted infirmity and misery to be presented as a *complaint*, but never as an *objection*. —I have observed it not uncommon for this to be a season of peculiar temptation ; a spiritual enemy stands ready to defeat every spiritual opportunity : but our help is near, and our example, in such conflicts, excellent. *For this thing I besought the Lord*

^c Pf. xxii. 4, 5.

^d 2 Cor. iii. 5.

thrice :

*thrice:—and he said unto me ‘ My GRACE is
 ‘ sufficient for thee : for my strength is made
 ‘ perfect in weakness.’* May you be enabled
 to add with the apostle, ‘ *most gladly, there-
 ‘ fore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that
 ‘ the power of Christ may rest on me.*’

That you may seek cheerfully this assistance, REGARD YOUR ENCOURAGEMENTS.—To recover our alienated minds and gain our confidence, God meets us in a way suited to our necessities, and to our fears.—Resist, as the vilest temptation, any doubt of that *Good will to Man* which was sung at the Redeemer’s birth.—What hath God not done in order to commend his love?—By every expression of tender concern he, in the person of a *Man of sorrows*, invites the guilty, the weary, the trembling, and the tempted to come unto him ; assuring them that he will neither *break the bruised reed*, nor *quench the smoking flax*^f.—If *God is love*^g,
 “ Christ is God stooping to the senses, and

^e 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. ^f Matt. xii. 20. ^g 1 John iv. 16.

“ speaking

“ speaking to the heart of man :” ever saying, ‘ look to my Cross, take my Yoke, ‘ and lean upon my Arm, and ye shall find ‘ rest.’—He sought the house of mourning to comfort the sisters of Lazarus :—he met a widow following her only child, and, *when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her ‘ weep not^h’.*—May he meet you at this time, my Dear Friend, with consolations which none but himself can afford : and then, at the very grave, shall that saying be brought to pass, ‘ *Death ‘ is swallowed up in victoryⁱ’.* Let such fear, as despise our heavenly *Friend*, our *Prospects*, *Provisions*, *Companions*, and sense of *Duty* :—God with us, and all things in God, is light in darkness, life in death. The words which revived him, who styles himself *your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ^k*, remain to cheer a solitude darker (if possible) than his. ‘ *Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; ‘ I am he that liveth and was dead ; and be-*

^h Luke vii. 13.ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 54.^k Rev. i. 9.‘ *bold*

- ‘ *hold I am alive for ever more, Amen : and*
 ‘ *have the keys of hell and of death*¹.’

To conclude:—the late event solemnly repeats its author’s charge “ BE YE ALSO READY^m.” Your friend is gone ; your following is certain ; it may be sudden ; it may be next.—But should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfuges of the prophane, or the scarcely less miserable supports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the most affecting delusion or stupidity) will it occasion!—What an awful transition to pass from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE ! without love to him ; without even an acquaintance with him ; unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed!—And to Him who has so often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conscience with the truths we have been considering!—What a subject for eternal reflection ‘ *You would not come to him, that you might have life*ⁿ!’

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18.

^m Matt. xxiv. 44.

ⁿ John. v. 40.

God forbid, however, that this should be *your* case ! I only suppose it, lest it should ; and it is too common to render the supposition improper. From such a danger we cannot be too secure ; and, therefore, having lately seen how soon *the night cometh when no man can work*^o, let us seek *to-day*, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that peace and safety which you must be conscious can never be found out of it, and which it may be too late to seek to-morrow.

Some things belonging to our important change are wisely hid from us ; nothing, however, is more plain than that it is *near*, and therefore demands our most serious attention :—that it is finally *decisive*^p, and therefore warns us to watch against those errors which eternity cannot rectify :—and, that the hour is *uncertain*, and, therefore, calls us to stand prepared.—With our *loins girded*, and our *lights burning*, may we thus wait for our Lord !

• John ix. 4.

p Matt. xxv. 46.

Impressed with such views, I have often wished to take the afflicted by the hand, and lead them to a resource their passions have obscured. I have wished them to see that the christian hope is then most alive and full of immortality, when every other hope perishes. These wishes, and the request of a friend, (who was solicitous to obtain something of this kind more compendious than he had yet seen) have drawn from me some imperfect hints.—Imperfect, however, as they are, like a few words, presented by the road's side to the eye of a weary traveller, they may afford you some present direction and relief.—And should He, who is pleased to employ the feeblest means in his greatest work, conduct you by them (though but a single step on your way) towards a *Morning without clouds*—a *House without mourning*,—the service of your affectionate Friend will obtain an high reward.

F I N I S.